

Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 00939 041632Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08

COME-00 FEAE-00 TRSE-00 /062 W

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1195

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE YAOUNDE 939

KINSHASA FOR SEELYE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, CM, US

SUBJ: SHELL REPRESENTATIVES MEET PRESIDENT AHIDJO

1. IN MEETING MARCH 4 WITH SHELL REPS BLACKBURN, THREET, RANKIN, AND FORMER US AMBASSADOR HOFFACKER, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR SPIRO, PRESIDENT AHIDJO IMPRESSIVELY DISPLAYED FULL FAMILIARITY WITH ACTIVITIES AND ROLE OF SHELL IN CAMEROON, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SHELL AND ITS FRENCH PARTNER ELF, AND URGED SHELL TO MAINTAIN PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN COUNTRY.

2. VP BLACKBURN OF SHELL GAVE RESUME OF SHELL'S PROSPECTING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, BOTH IN CONCESSIONS WHERE IT HAS MAJORITY INTEREST AND IN THOSE WHERE ELF HAS MAJORITY OF 51 PERCENT AND IS OPERATOR. BECAUSE LATTER SHOW GREATER PROMISE, BLACKBURN HINTED THAT SHELL MIGHT CEASE PROSPECTING OPERATIONS AND ONLY MAINTAIN SPIRITUAL PRESENCE. AHIDJO CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THIS, PRAISED SHELL FOR BEING PRIME MOVER BEHIND EVEN ELF'S ACTIVITIES, AND URGED SHELL TO MAINTAIN PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN COUNTRY. BLACKBURN EXPLAINED THAT SHELL HAD SO FAR SPENT \$50 MILLION ON EXPLORATION AND \$10 MILLION ON DEVELOPMENT, THAT

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PAGE 02 YAOUND 00939 041632Z

IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUAL ACCUMULATIONS FINDS ARE NOT LARGE BY WORLD STANDARDS, BUT THEY WOULD YIELD SUBSTANTIAL OIL OVER LONGER PERIOD. SHELL HOPES TO EXPORT TO THE US SURPLUS LEFT OVER AFTER CAMEROON'S NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET IF THAT SUITED GURC'S OBJECTIVES. PRESIDENT RESPONDED, "PERFECTLY".

3. AHIDJO ALSO MENTIONED THAT GURC HAD NOT GIVEN OIL PRODUCTION

PROSPECTS MUCH PUBLICITY IN ORDER TO AVOID RAISING EXCESSIVE EXPECTATIONS TO A POINT WHERE PEOPLE NO LONGER WANTED TO DO ANY WORK, AS IN GABON. AHIDJO TOLD SHELL REPS THAT IF THEY HAD ANY PROBLEMS IN FUTURE WITH MINISTRIES OR OTHERS TO LET HIM KNOW SO HE COULD STRAIGHTEN THEM OUT.

4. COMMENT: AHIDJO IS OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF SHELL'S DIFFICULTIES WITH FRENCH PARTNER ELF AND VERY EAGER TO HAVE US FIRM MAINTAIN PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN CAMEROON, IN PART PROBABLY IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN COMPETITIVE PRESSURE ON ELF. ON WAY BACK FROM PALACE, BLACKBURN TOYED WITH THE IDEA, IF SHELL'S CONCESSION SHOULD PROVE INSUFFICIENTLY PRODUCTIVE, OF MAINTAINING OFFICE IN DOUALA IN ANY CASE. SHELL REPS WERE VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY AHIDJO.
SPIRO

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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